

# ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Department of Children and Family Services®



## From the DCFS Director

*Bryan Samuels*

The month of November gives us a special opportunity to focus on giving thanks. This month is also Adoption Appreciation Month in Illinois and across the nation. So, I say thank you to all the families created and expanded through adoption. I appreciate the commitment that you have made to share your life with children.

The child welfare system in Illinois worked with parents to complete 1,670 adoptions during fiscal year 2006, which ended in June. Today there are more Illinois children in adoptive and guardianship homes than in foster care homes. That is good news for the state and better news for children now growing up in stable, nurturing families.

For all of the foster, adoptive and guardianship families that we have the privilege to serve, this holiday season I wish sincere happiness and good fortune. Please know that DCFS and all of our agency partners are committed to doing all that we can to help you as you help children.

## Understanding trauma: Bad behavior could be brain behavior

Many foster parents at some point will hear an in-law, teacher or stranger in the grocery store mutter, "What that child really needs is a..." (insert their preferred method of discipline.) In most cases, their uninformed recommendation is not in the best interest of the child. It also goes against a body of research that links some behaviors, conditions and disorders back to the abuse or neglect that brought the child into care. The trauma of abuse and neglect has an impact on how a child develops physically, psychologically, emotionally and cognitively. That trauma can play out in actions that can be difficult for a caregiver to even tolerate, much less understand and manage. DCFS is taking a much closer look at trauma and developing training and social work practices to address trauma while serving children's needs.

Birth to age three is the critical time for laying a solid foundation for physical and emotional growth. The brain begins its basic "wiring" for future learning. Attachment or bonding with the mother is usually thought of in an emotional sense, with greeting-card images of mothers cradling angel-faced

infants. That simple act of holding actually trips off brain activity that can be measured medically. The neurological stimulation is sending signals to the frontal lobe of the brain, which acts as a traffic cop for functions like impulse control and self-regulation. The circuits built there affect how the lower parts of the brain react and bring functions such as heartbeat and the nervous system into play.

When the pathways in the brain are not properly formed, those "roadblocks" can result in what we see as behavior problems. Children may not be able to sit still, they are easily frightened, they don't trust adults, they don't get along with peers... and the list continues. A mother who used drugs while pregnant, a family history of mental illness or premature birth weight are just a few of many other factors that increase the possibility of improper brain development. Those circumstances also leave a child more vulnerable to the trauma of abuse and neglect. In other words, children in care often come in with the deck stacked against them.

*Continued on page 2*

## Trauma, con't.

Inattention from or actual separation from the mother is just one aspect of trauma. Youth in care may also have faced violence in the home directed at them or happening in front of them. They may have experienced deaths of family members or severe illnesses that they were not emotionally equipped to handle. They may have transferred schools. They may have moved abruptly or even been homeless. The cumulative effect of trauma is bound to come out when they are taken from their chaotic, but familiar, element and placed into foster care.

This basic understanding is driving many changes in the Department's lifetime approach to addressing children's needs. DCFS is investing resources in early childhood services, recognizing the importance of interventions at a time when they can have the greatest potential impact. The Integrated Assessment Program is being tailored to look for trauma and its impact on a child's development in many areas when a child first comes into care. That will allow the right services to become part of the service plan. The Department developed a new curriculum to train caseworkers and caregivers on trauma, with an emphasis on how to work with children who experienced trauma. This training will offer more practical and more beneficial recommendations than the off-hand "what that child really needs is..."



## Relative caregivers can receive more benefits when licensed

This fall the Department undertook an intense effort to work with relative caregivers so they could become licensed as foster parents. Relative caregivers should have received a letter from the Department explaining that unlicensed relatives will not be eligible for certain federal funding programs. The news is not all bad. When relatives become licensed, DCFS also receives more federal money to support children and families. Furthermore, licensed relatives caring for children placed with them by DCFS receive the benefits of more training and increased monthly payments to provide for children's needs.

During a family crisis, caregivers need to prepare for the realities of caring for children in need of child welfare services. Relative caregivers can take a six-hour course in class or watch recorded training materials in their home. Training will help relative caregivers understand the developmental and emotional stages of the children in their care. By learning in advance what foster parenting can entail, they will be better able to handle the challenges that may come along. Many substitute caregivers decide to go on and take the full 27-hour Foster PRIDE series of classes required to be a foster parent to non-related children.

When relative caregivers become licensed, they also become eligible for the foster care board rate.



This monthly payment is typically higher than the "standard of need" rate for unlicensed relatives. For example, a great-aunt from Champaign providing care for her 11-year-old niece could receive \$292 a month at the standard of need rate. After becoming licensed, she would receive \$422 for the child's clothing, board and personal allowance.

Both DCFS and private agency caseworkers received training on how to help unlicensed relatives become licensed. These relatives will have to comply with current licensing standards, including fingerprinting, medical exams and training. In some cases, workers can request waivers to allow an applicant to become licensed, even though they are not in full compliance with a specific licensing standard.

Taking care of a child during a family crisis that requires DCFS involvement is not an easy task. Becoming licensed will give these caregivers more educational and financial resources.

## Register for the 2007 *Building Families* Caregiver Institutes

One of the toughest questions that strangers pose to foster parents usually sounds something like, “isn’t it hard to take care of a child you know is going to leave?” The 2007 Caregiver Institutes *Building Families: Connecting Caregivers, Parents and Youth* will tackle that topic as it relates to reunification, as well as other permanency options.

Caregivers who attend one of the Institutes will:

- understand the complex legal, physical and emotional ties youth have to their families of origin
- learn how to support youth and their families as they work toward a return home
- discover ways build connections with youth that last, regardless of the permanency goal

The Saturday sessions once again will run from February through April in locations throughout the state. The DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development’s Office of Foster Parent Support Services started working nearly a year ago with an extensive planning committee of parents and staff to develop this program for caregivers, which includes the following sessions:

- Youth Perspective on Family
- Regional Perspectives on Foster Care and Reunification and the Evolving Role of Caregivers
- Permanency Planning Towards Reunification: What it Means for Caregivers

- Focusing on Positive Outcomes (Downstate, only)
- *Break-out 1* The Quest for Family: Understanding the Process for Older Youth
- *Break-out 2* Understanding the Caregiver Role in Reunification
- The Pathway to Family: A Panel Discussion (Cook County, only)

All DCFS and private agency foster, adoptive, guardianship and relative caregivers are invited to the Caregiver Institutes. The Saturday institutes will begin at 9 a.m. (registration opens at 8:30 a.m.) and end at 3 p.m. Complimentary lunch will be served. Participants will be able to earn DCFS foster parent training credit hours by signing in and attending the full-day institute.

There will be no provisions for childcare and no place for children to stay on site. Families must not bring children. There may be limited funds available through the DCFS regions to reimburse DCFS-supervised caregivers for childcare or mileage (not lodging) expenses to attend this training. Caregivers should follow normal procedures within their own region to check on potential reimbursement before attending. Attendees from private agencies should contact their agencies in advance to determine whether they can be reimbursed for these expenses.

### Registration opens Dec. 4

Participants may only register by calling the toll free telephone number for DCFS Registration at 877-800-3393. Call the Registration line after December 4 if you wish to attend, as there are only a limited number of seats at each site. The registration number is open Monday - Friday, from 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. You will receive a confirmation letter via e-mail or post from DCFS after completing the phone registration.

### February 10

Maywood, DCFS Field Office

### February 17

Chicago, DCFS Cook South Regional Office

### February 24

Bloomington, Eastland Suites

### March 3

Fairview Heights, Four Points Sheraton

### March 10

Rock Island, Four Points Sheraton

### March 24

Southern Region, Rend Lake Conference Center

### March 31

Charleston, Eastern Illinois University

### April 7

Rockford, Clocktower Resort

### April 14

Kankakee, Hilton Garden Inn



## Patience, tolerance and compromise make the best holiday gifts

December is one time of the year when obeying the law can translate into holiday fun. The Illinois Foster Parent Law states that it is the foster parent's responsibility to "Respect and maintain a child's cultural needs and support relationships with his own family." With the many religious and cultural holidays that abound in December, this can be a time to learn about new cultures and share memories with your children in ways you might not have considered.

Start by asking foster children about the holidays as they experienced them before coming to your home. If you are parenting across cultures, it is especially important to get some background on the holiday traditions that are meaningful to the child and his or her family. Yet, even children of the same religious faith as their caregivers may have emphasized different aspects of a holiday. Some families might open Christmas presents on Christmas Eve while others wait until the morning. Still others might skip presents all together and give handmade gifts or exchange personal favors.

Straddling between two sets of family traditions can be complicated. The key is to talk about the holidays and work out ways to honor the child's past and present family rituals while he is in your home. Patience, tolerance and compromise might be the best gifts of all. Following are highlights of several more

commonly practiced winter religious and cultural holidays that may be significant to children in your home. There may be others, so talk directly with children.

### Chanukah

In 2006, Chanukah will be observed beginning at sundown on December 15. Jews celebrate *Chanukah* or *Hanukkah* to mark the victory over Syrian rulers, who more than 2,300 years ago tried to force the Jewish people to renounce their faith and worship Greek gods. Led by Judah Maccabee and his brothers, the Jewish fighters drove the Syrians out of the land of Judea (now Israel) and reclaimed the temple at Jerusalem after a three-year struggle. On the 25th day of the Hebrew month Kislev, the Maccabees finished cleaning out the temple and rededicated it.

They found only a tiny jug of oil to use to light an eternal flame. The oil in the jar should only have lasted a day, but it burned for eight days. The modern day Festival of Lights or *Chanukah* lasts for eight days to commemorate the miracle of the oil. Families celebrate *Chanukah* at home by lighting the menorah, eating special food and giving gifts.

### Las Posadas

In Mexico the *posada*, which means lodging or shelter in Spanish, is celebrated every evening from December 16 to 24 to commemorate Mary and



Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. On each night of the *posada*, a home in the neighborhood plays host to a party with food, drinks and candy and fruit for the children. At dusk, a young child dressed as an angel leads a procession to the host home. Children dressed in silver and gold robes carry figures of Mary and Joseph. The adults and musicians follow as everyone sings *alguinaldos* (Christmas carols) holding lit candles.

Arriving at the house, the group splits in two, with one half going inside as the other remains outside and begs for shelter. When the doors open, the solemn aspect of the celebration gives way to fun. To end the *posada*, the children take turns swinging at a star-shaped piñata, hoping to release the treats inside.

## Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is an African-American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates family, community and culture. It is celebrated from December 26 through January 1. Its origins are in the first harvest celebrations of Africa. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase “*matunda ya kwanza*” which means “first fruits” in Swahili, which is the most widely spoken African language. Kwanzaa is celebrated by an estimated 26 million people around the world.

Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chair of the Department of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach. Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday, not a religious one. It is centered around the *Nguzo Saba* (The Seven Principles) to help strengthen and reaffirm the family.

To celebrate Kwanzaa, first a central place in the home is chosen for the Kwanzaa Set, the symbols of Kwanzaa. A table is then spread with a beautiful piece of African cloth. Then, the *mkeka*

(mat) is placed down and all of the other symbols are placed on it or immediately next to it. Next, the *Kinara* (candle holder) is placed on the mat and the *Mishumaa Saba* (seven candles) are placed in the *kinara*. Each candle and each of the seven days of the Kwanzaa celebration focus on one of seven principles.

The black candle represents the first principle *Umoja* (unity) and is placed in the center of the *kinara*. The red candles represent the principles of *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics) and *Kuumba* (creativity) and are placed to the left of the black candle. The green candles represent the principles of *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Nia* (purpose) and *Imani* (faith) and are placed to the right of the black candle.

At the evening meal, the family members light one of the seven candles to commemorate the principle of the day. The black candle is lit first on the first day of the celebration. The remaining candles are lit afterwards from left to right on the following days. This procedure is to indicate that the people come first, then the struggle and then the hope that comes from the struggle. While the candle burns, the household discusses the principle of the day. Everyone explains what the *Nguzo Saba* principle of that day means to them and how they have practiced it during the day. After the discussion, everyone makes a

commitment to practice and promote the particular principle throughout the year. To close out, seven “*Harambee*” (Swahili for “Let’s all pull together”) are called out. Various other activities are organized to practice and promote the principle of the day. These include working together on projects, studying and learning more on African culture, sharing narratives and other literature, poems, dance and drama; and making Kwanzaa items as symbols and/or gifts. All of these are to celebrate the holiday and reaffirm and reinforce family, community and culture.

*Adapted from the Official Kwanzaa Web site. For more information about Kwanzaa, visit the Web site at: [www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org](http://www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org)*

## El Dia de los Tres Reyes (Three King’s Day)

Three King’s Day follows the account of the Three Magi who brought gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold to the infant Jesus. It begins at dawn on January 6. The night before, Puerto Rican children place cut grass into a shoebox and top it with a wish list. The grass is intended as a treat for the kings’ camels after their journey. The *Reyes* (kings) will only come if the child has been good all year.

After a night of anticipation, fortunate children wake to find gifts left by the *Reyes*. They spend the day playing with toys and enjoying a holiday meal with family and friends.



## Plan now for caregiver tax benefits

Start gathering receipts and check stubs now. In January, families should receive in the mail the free Tax Booklet for Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parents. The Center for Economic Progress develops the guide, which provides practical tax tips and information. The booklet is updated yearly and distributed to thousands of Illinois families with foster or adoptive children.

Written in plain language, the booklet walks foster and adoptive parents (and their tax professionals) through the steps necessary to claim the maximum tax benefits available to caregivers. Center staff members also provide training seminars and consultation by phone to families with tax questions about claiming their foster children on their income tax return.

Tax booklets are mailed to foster and adoptive families by the end of January. If you do not receive a booklet, you may request one by sending an email to [taxtraining@centerforprogress.org](mailto:taxtraining@centerforprogress.org) or by calling 312-252-0280.

To find out about a free tax preparation site near you, refer to your Tax Booklet, visit <http://www.centerforprogress.org/>, or call 312-409-6511 within the Chicago area or 888-827-8511 outside Chicago.

## Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council update

The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is preparing for one of its busiest times of the year. Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans are due from all agency and DCFS regional foster care programs on November 30. Then members will begin reviewing and scoring each plan. Several council members review each of more than 75 plans, so the task is daunting. The members of the council volunteer many hours of their own time to review these plans.

"We believe that it is important the agencies state how they will support foster families and then do what they say," said chair Uli Senz.

The implementation plans outline how the agency services specifically address the rights and responsibilities stated in the Foster Parent Law. Foster parents should have had opportunities to give their input to the draft of the implementation plan and should see the final document. If it is not provided directly, the council recommends that caregivers ask their agency for a copy.



Patricia Welander

**New member** Patricia Welander, of Leroy, joined the Council to represent Central region. She and her husband have been foster parents for five years. They are also adoptive parents. Welander has been a Court Appointed Special Advocate in McLean County. She



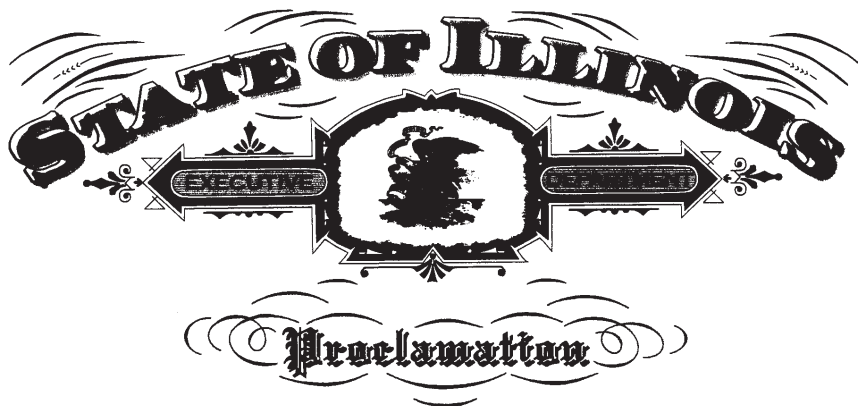
Statewide Youth Advisory Board Chair Rena Gillison and Uli Senz, Chair of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Board conduct a joint meeting.

works as a freelance writer for the Leroy paper and the Bloomington Pantagraph.

### Highlights from recent meetings

The September meeting was an annual event with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB). After a full agenda in the afternoon, the Council met with co-chair Rena Gillison and fellow youth leaders from around the state to discuss common issues. In October, the Northern region hosted the Council in Rockford. November brought the annual joint meeting with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. The two councils marked National Adoption month together. They also discussed the changes in DCFS policy on placing children in foster homes and the reorganization in the Office of Foster Parent Training. The next meeting will be Friday, January 19 in Bloomington at the Eastland Suites. Contact the Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422 with any questions you may have.





WHEREAS, adoption is a rewarding and enriching experience for individuals and couples who want to provide children with a stable, loving family environment; and

WHEREAS, Illinois is recognized as a national leader in finding permanent homes for waiting children, placing more than 47,000 foster children into adoptive and subsidized guardianship homes since 1997; and

WHEREAS, largely because of its success in adoption recruitment, Illinois has become the first state in the nation to support more children in permanent adoption guardianship placements than in substitute care; and

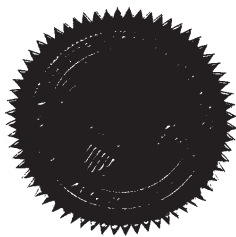
WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Child Care Association of Illinois, the Adoption Information Center of Illinois, the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, the Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, the Chicago Bar Association, and the many Illinois child welfare agencies and adoptive parent groups all encourage families to consider adopting a child in need of a home; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of children in Illinois are still awaiting adoption:

THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim November 2006 as **ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all families to consider adopting a child into their family.

*In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.*

*Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,*  
 this TWENTY-THIRD day of OCTOBER, in  
 the Year of Our Lord two thousand and  
SIX, and of the State of Illinois  
 the one hundred and EIGHTY-EIGHTH



*Deane Whitte*

SECRETARY OF STATE

*Rod Blagojevich*

GOVERNOR



## Illinois Celebrates ADOPTION

### November is Adoption Awareness Month

In 2005, 1,867 adoptions were finalized in Illinois because families and individuals have generously chosen to share their homes and love with children in need.

Adoptive parents are offering hope that will leave a lasting impression on the hearts of children.

By offering your encouragement and support to adoptive families, you too can make a difference in the life of a child.

**For more information,**  
 call 800/572-2390  
 or visit  
[www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org)





## Family Matters:

### Make plans when an adoptive parent dies

Approximately 400 post-adoptive parents have died, leaving behind minor children. The Family Matters Project is a pilot to help older or ill adoptive or guardianship parents make arrangements in case they become unable to care for their children or die. The program will include social work and legal services provided by the Center for Law and Social Work (CLSW).

One of the first clients in the new program was a caregiver who suffered from serious congestive heart failure. She needed a plan for her adopted grandchildren, ages 12 and 16. The father of the children's half-sister met with the grandmother and CLSW staff to go over options. He decided to adopt both children. The family received assistance with the adoption documents and help in re-writing the subsidies.

The point of the program is to allow adoptive and guardianship parents to make decisions on how to provide appropriate care for their children in advance and according to their wishes. After the one-year pilot, the CLSW will deliver a report to DCFS and the Illinois Legislature including recommendations to reach and assist older or ill caregivers in making future care and custody plans. For more information contact Dana Corman at 312-786-6000.



## DCFS carves out new role for Adoption Specialists



*Ursula Angielski*

At a recent meeting of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, Ursula Angielski, the DCFS Statewide Adoption Coordinator, described the role of the adoption specialist. For families supervised by DCFS, adoption specialists are an old idea that has been made new again. Adoption specialists don't carry cases. They are attached to placement teams, and serve as consultants to help move cases toward permanency. They will come on board when the permanency goal changes from return home. They provide technical support to staff and to prospective adoptive and guardianship families.

An important initial task for the adoption specialist is to go through the child's entire case file. They look to see why the child came into DCFS care and under what conditions. They also look for documentation on the child's needs and services that are necessary. They seek all available background information about the child and birth family. Additionally, they flag information that is missing from the file so they can assist the team in doing a comprehensive disclosure to the family that is considering adoption or guardianship.

Adoption specialists will meet with the family to talk about any needs or issues that had not been previously addressed. They also make certain that resources

called for in the service plan are in place before moving to finalization.

The other key activity for the adoption specialist is to start drafting the subsidy agreement. This document serves as a contract with the Department, covering the provisions that will be in place after the adoption is finalized or guardianship is transferred. Typically the subsidy will include a monthly subsidy payment, medical coverage and reimbursement for attorney fees, among other services. The specialists should make clear to the family which services are allowable in the subsidy and what is not. In some cases, services in place under foster care will not be allowed into the adoption subsidy.

When the draft is ready, it goes to the adoption attorney for review. The adoption specialist will work to incorporate any agreed on revisions. Parents should not sign their copy until they hear from their attorney. After the subsidy is complete, the attorney will take over with the court proceedings and the adoption specialist will take care of closing the foster care case moving it to post-adoption or guardianship status.

For questions about the adoption specialists, DCFS-supervised foster parents should contact Ursula Angielski at 312-793-3348. Private agency families can contact their agencies directly.



## Illinois Adoption Advisory Council News

It was an active fall for the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. The October meeting included presentations on the role of the DCFS adoption specialists and the pilot program to help older and ill adoptive families make future care and custody plans (see preceding page for details). In November, the Adoption Advisory Council joined forces with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council to discuss issues of common interest, including changes to the process for placing children in homes and restructuring the foster parent training program.

### Raising adoption awareness

Marilyn Panichi of Adoptions Unlimited showed council members tapes of new Public Service Announcements (PSAs) developed by the National Ad Council for television stations. These "mini-commercials" use humorous situations to make the point you don't have to be perfect to be a parent. They also include a toll-free phone number for viewers to call for more information on foster parenting and adoption. Members of the advisory council volunteered to approach local TV stations with a request to air them.

### Family Connections

Adoptions Unlimited is administering a federal grant for the Family Connections Project. This project will develop adoption services and supports for youth who wish to retain family contact in order to improve permanency

outcomes. The Adoption Advisory Council viewed a video highlighting older youth who were formerly in DCFS care. They spoke very poignantly about their desire to have some level of connectedness with their birth families, even after they had been adopted. One young woman speaking of her birth family said, "You can't just rewind and erase it." She made the point that ignoring the existing connections could cause more hurt. The youth in the video expressed appreciation for their adoptive parents who respected that need and supported them by maintaining connections. The video will be used as an education tool for caseworkers and court personnel.

### Angels in Adoption



Jeanne  
Howard



Susan  
Smith

Council member Jeanne Howard and consultant to the council Susan Smith are winners of the congressional Angel in Adoption Award. Howard and Smith are the founding co-directors of the Center for Adoption Studies at Illinois State University. Both have used their research expertise on behalf of adoptive and guardianship families. Their findings have helped fuel important enhancements and new services for Illinois children. The national recognition is well-deserved.



The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council is co-chaired by Elizabeth Richmond, an adoptive parent and Jim Jones, Executive Director of ChildServ.

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council advises the Department on resources, policy and practices related to adoption and guardianship. The Council supports families and children in the adoption process and after they adopt. The Council's membership includes adoptive parents, adult adopted individuals and other experts from all parts of the state.

The meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be February 2, 2007 in Bloomington at the Eastland Suites Conference Center. The meeting begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m.

For more information on the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, contact the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services at 217-524-2422.

## Who do you call when...

### ***A child in your home is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization?***

Call the CARES line at 800-345-9049. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first. The CARES line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### ***...You feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency?***

After you've tried to resolve the issue with the caseworker and supervisors, then call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

### ***...You need to report a child missing or have information about a youth who has run away?***

To report information on missing youth call 866-503-0184, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### ***...You have questions about your board check?***

Call DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. For other checks, contact your private agency.

### ***...You have questions about your child's medical card?***

Call 800-228-6533.

### ***...You are having a family crisis with your adopted child***

Contact the Adoption Preservation Program that serves your area. Judy Pence at 217-557-5677 can direct you to the appropriate agency.

### ***...You are interested in adopting one of the children featured in the newsletter?***

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org).

### ***...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?***

Each region has a reporter to help gather local news. They are listed in the regional section of each edition. Or you can contact the Editor, Vanessa James.

## Tell it like it is

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the “real deal” on caring for children from those who know best-You!

### ***What have you done to work cooperatively with a birth parent to help foster children prepare to return home?***

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at [vanessa.james@illinois.gov](mailto:vanessa.james@illinois.gov) or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to hearing from you.



***Illinois Families  
Now and Forever***

**Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor**

**Bryan Samuels, DCFS Director**

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**Purpose:** To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

**Address Changes:** Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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## A family for me

**Vicky** [7019] Vicky, 16, is an energetic young lady who likes to keep busy. Her favorite activities include going to the swimming pool and shopping at the mall. In quieter moments, she enjoys taking long walks and going on scenic car rides.

Her worker said Vicky is energetic and can be helpful when others need a hand. The family for Vicky would be on that could provide lots of love and supervision. You could also have experience with children who have special needs.

**Carolyn** [7581] Carolyn, 13, is a sweet, respectful young lady who loves sports. She practices running and plays double-Dutch jump rope. She would like to become more involved in volleyball, basketball, and even football. Carolyn is a little quiet when first meeting someone, but she quickly becomes more talkative as she gets comfortable. In addition to chatting with friends, Carolyn enjoys shopping and food.

Her worker said Carolyn is kind and well-behaved. Her teacher said Carolyn works very hard to

achieve good grades. Parents for Carolyn would provide her with love and encouragement. Carolyn said she would like to join a nice family that lives in a safe area and doesn't drink or smoke.

**Denzel** [7559] Denzel, 7, is a warm and friendly young man. He has a gift for creative expression, both verbally and through artwork. When he's not socializing or sitting at the drawing table, Denzel likes to play basketball. His energetic nature and love of competition help him succeed at all kinds of athletic activities.

His worker said Denzel is curious and likes to take the initiative to do things on his own. His teachers and foster parents said Denzel is a talented artist and very caring. Potential parents for Denzel could be loving and supportive with him, while at the same time helping him learn appropriate boundaries and limits.

**Edward** [7591] Edward, 12, is an athletic young man who enjoys playing football and basketball. He is extremely loyal to his friends and the people who care about him. In school, he learns

quickly and receives good grades. After school, he likes to play video games.

His teachers and foster parent said Edward is intelligent and friendly. He can be very respectful. The family for Edward would provide him lots of love and support, as well as clear guidelines and consequences. He will do best in a family with a strong father figure.

**Erica** [7567] Erica, 13, is a friendly young lady who may be a little shy at first, but really loves to socialize. She enjoys helping younger children, and among her friends, she is a positive influence who helps resolve conflicts. After school, Erica enjoys cheerleading and participating in social clubs.

Her worker said Erica loves pets, including the new puppies in her foster home. She likes to dress nicely and is very talented at doing people's hair. Erica is ready to join an adoptive family. That family would be one that could be kind and supportive. Erica said her ideal family would be "cuddly, fair, and respectful."



**If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – [www.adoptinfo-il.org](http://www.adoptinfo-il.org).**



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# DO YOU KNOW A FAMILY FOR ME?

Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.



Vicky [7019]



Carolyn [7581]



Denzel [7559]



Edward [7591]



Erica [7567]

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